1: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930) 1933 OM10 New Ireland OM10
Lesu

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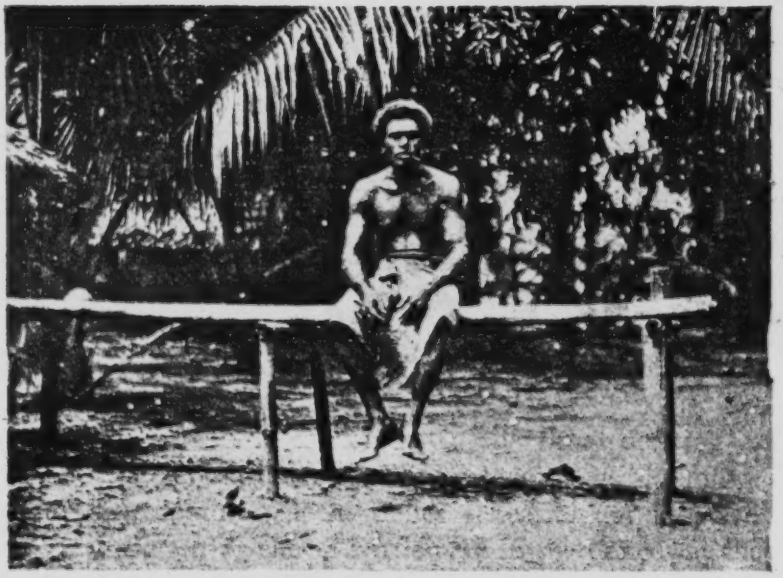
417



THE "LULUAI" OR CHIEF

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A HAPPY FAMILY IN FRONT OF THEIR HOME

[Facing p. 43]

1: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930) 1933 OM10 New Ireland OM10
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881 singing, until they come to the hamlet of Ponatlege, where the enclosure is to be built. Ridis, an old man, leads in the singing. When they arrive at Ponatlege the women and girls (about 150 of them) are already sitting on the ground in the open compound preparing the taro to be baked. The men and boys pass by them and proceed to the beach, where they put down their bamboo poles and lay them lengthwise. Ongas, the chief of Lesu, and known for his building skill, is in command of the work. Poles are stuck [417] in the ground as a support for the split bamboo logs, which are laid on top of each other, thus making a fence about 30 feet high for the large enclosure, which is approximately 45 by 100 feet. There is no roof. As they labour the men sing. Young boys watch the work with interest. The name for this enclosure is *nogu*, which is the name for any fence made of split wood.

While the enclosure is constructed the women scrape the taro, laying them on the banana leaves, sprinkle the shredded coconut over it, and bind it all up into a bundle. Some of the men not occupied in building the enclosure make the *liga*, the piles of hot stones. In a few hours' time the taro is all wrapped in bundles and put in the *liga*, which is then completely covered with leaves and sand; the main part of the latter work is done by the men, but the women assist. The men have also prepared a pig, which is being baked in a separate *liga*.

The enclosure has been finished. The men and women sit in the compound or at ease on the beach, chatting. The men are in groups apart from the women. Soon the *kolamuth* [534] (a hollowed tree-trunk used as a drum) is sounded inside the enclosure, and the men wend their way there. Some of [482] them carry on their shoulder poles to which coconuts are tied. The food is removed from the *liga* and other men carry part of it into the enclosure. The women pile the remainder in their baskets. It is early afternoon now and the men eat in

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There is no magic in ordinary gardening, but when particularly large crops are desired for special feasts, such as those accompanying circumcision or *malanggan* rites, the planting of the taro is preceded by the making of magic. After the ground is cleared, but before the planting begins, the taro magician makes his magic. Then, if the taro is to be used for an especially large and important feast, the rain magician is called upon to make his magic. A large amount of rain is considered necessary for a good crop of taro.[1]

The first stage in gardening is the clearing of a piece of bush ground, between six and seven hundred square feet in size, always done by a man, assisted sometimes by his son. This takes about two weeks if a man and his son work every day. Sometimes all the men of the hamlet will assist. For instance, all the men of Penguli helped Noas clear bush ground for a new garden, and a feast was held later in the day in payment for their assistance. First, the trees and brush are cut down and left a few days to dry and then burned; after this the place for the fence is "marked" by putting vine along the ground, and holes are made in which the posts of the fence will later be inserted. These holes are made with a long stick, sharpened to a point. The posts are stuck in and afterward the cross-pieces of the fence are laid. Bamboo is the most common material used for fences. Vine is used to tie the logs to the posts. When the ground is completely cleared and the fence finished, the garden is ready to be planted.

Planting is the woman's task, and taro is the chief crop. Very few yams are planted in Lesu, but in other villages (Logagon, Lossuk, etc.) yams are planted along with the taro in large quantities. But even here taro remains the staple

[1] In an exceptionally dry season taro may be transplanted to moist ground along a river. Then if rain should come it may be moved back again to its original place.